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STATINTL

Ike, the Partisan Warrior

THE search for peace is not a partisan issue, Mr. Eisenhower once said, but if partisanship is supposed to stop at the water's edge of crisis, let it be noted the former president has no hesitancy in wading to his knees.

In a free-swinging speech in Chicago last week end, Mr. Eisenhower unleashed a volley at the Kennedy administration, charging it with "indecision and uncertainty" in dealing with the Cuban and Laotian crises. He said he was "sorely troubled" by the handling of recent events.

Coming from a man whose entire administration was typified by drift, vagueness and indecision, this has a touch of humor of the sick joke variety. But since Mr. Eisenhower obviously wasn't trying to be humorous, the most that can be said in his defense is that it was uncharacteristic of him.

The Cuban incident was a fiasco for which Mr. Kennedy has shouldered full blame, but he could, if he wished, point out that some very bad advice came from members of the government appointed in the Eisenhower administration, includ-

ing CIA chief Allen Dulles. He could also point out who first set the chain of events in motion.

Doubtless it would be unkind to remind Mr. Eisenhower of Dien Bien Phu and why it fell. But since he brought up Laos, his administration's ineptness in dealing with it since 1958 is primarily responsible for the problem Mr. Kennedy inherited.

In the light of this nation's responses elsewhere, maybe Mr. Eisenhower needs reminding that it was his secretary of defense who cut nearly eight billion from the armed services, thereby assuring inadequacies. And it was Mr. Eisenhower who promised Mr. Khrushchev the U.S. would never fight a ground war in Europe, thereby encouraging the Kremlin to go to the nuclear brink over Berlin.

If the former President now has the answers to Berlin, or Cuba, or Laos, he can bet his last acre in Pennsylvania he can get an audience and a sympathetic ear at the White House. If he hasn't, it comes with sour grace to belabor his successor over problems he was kind enough to leave when he moved out of the White House.

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